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2012-2013

THE MURIEL HALL LIBRARY
Peter ACKROYD  
London: the biography (N/F)

For Ackroyd, London is a living organism, with its own laws of growth and change, so he calls his book a biography rather than a history. There are chapters on the history of silence and the history of light, the history of childhood and the history of suicide, the history of Cockney speech and the history of drink. London is perhaps the most important study of the city ever written.

Aravind ADIGA  
The White Tiger

Balram, the ‘White Tiger’, was born in a backwater village on the River Ganges, the son of a rickshaw-puller. He works in a teashop, crushing coal and wiping tables, but nurses a dream of escape. When he learns that a rich village landlord needs a chauffeur, he takes his opportunity, and is soon on his way to Delhi behind the wheel of a Honda. Driven by desire to better himself, he comes to see how the Tiger might escape his cage... A very readable winner of the 2008 Man Booker Prize.

Carmen AGUIRRE  
Something Fierce

Something Fierce is the true story of a resistance member living in fear. Aged 11, Carmen Aguirre was taken by her mother away from her comfortable Canadian exile, back to South America, to spend her teenage years in the various safe houses her mother and stepfather ran. At 18, she joined the guerrilla resistance in Pinochet’s Chile. Today she lives in Canada again, where she is a celebrated playwright and actress.

Margaret ATWOOD  
The Handmaid’s Tale

The Republic of Gilead offers Offred only one function: to breed. If she deviates, she will, like all dissenters, be hanged at the wall or sent out to die slowly of radiation sickness. But even a repressive state cannot obliterate desire - neither Offred’s nor that of the two men on which her future hangs...

Margaret ATWOOD  
The Penelopiad

In a splendid contemporary twist to Homer’s ancient story, The Odyssey, Margaret Atwood has chosen to give the telling of it to Penelope and her twelve hanged maids, asking: “What led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to?” In a dazzling, playful retelling, the story becomes as wise and compassionate as it is haunting, and as wildly entertaining as it is disturbing. With wit and verve, she gives Penelope new life and reality - and sets out to provide an answer to an ancient mystery.

Jane AUSTEN  
Persuasion

At twenty-seven, Anne Elliot is no longer young and has few romantic prospects. Eight years earlier, she had been persuaded by her friend Lady Russell to break off her engagement to Frederick Wentworth, a handsome naval captain with neither fortune nor rank. What happens when they encounter each other again is told movingly. Set in the fashionable societies of Lyme Regis and Bath, Persuasion is a brilliant satire of vanity and pretension, but, above all, it is a love story tinged with the heartache of missed opportunities.

Jane AUSTEN  
Pride and Prejudice

Pride and Prejudice has delighted generations of readers with its hugely entertaining view of the world and its absurdities. With the arrival of eligible young men in their neighbourhood, the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters are turned upside-down. Pride encounters prejudice, upward-mobility confronts social disdain, and quick-wittedness challenges sagacity, as misconceptions and hasty judgements lead to heartache and scandal, but eventually to true understanding, self-knowledge, and love.
**Pat BARKER**

**Border Crossing**

When Danny was ten, Tom, a child psychologist, helped imprison him for the killing of an old woman. Now out of prison with a new identity, Danny has some questions. Reluctantly, Tom is drawn back into Danny's world - a place where the border between good and evil, innocence and guilt is blurred and confused. But when Danny's demands on Tom become extreme, Tom wonders whether he has crossed a line of his own - and in crossing it, can he ever go back?

**Pat BARKER**

**The Regeneration Trilogy**

Set during the First World War, the trilogy explores with gritty realism the whole dirty, glorious and horrifying business of war. The three novels, *Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door* and *The Ghost Road* are also available in separate volumes. *The Ghost Road* won the Booker Prize in 1995.

**Julian BARNES**

**The Sense of an Ending**

Winner of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2011 and a Sunday Times bestseller, this is a novel from a writer at the very height of his powers. *The Sense of an Ending* is the story of a middle-aged man trying to come to terms with events of the past, particularly during his late school and university years, which are thrown up in later years, and his memory of them with comes with varying degrees of accuracy.

**Sebastian BARRY**

**The Secret Scripture**

Nearing her one-hundredth birthday, Roseanne McNulty faces an uncertain future, as the Roscommon Regional Mental hospital where she has spent the best part of her adult life prepares for closure. Over the weeks she talks with her psychiatrist Dr. Grene. Refracted through the haze of memory and retelling, Roseanne's story becomes an alternative, secret history of Ireland's changing character and the story of a life blighted by terrible mistreatment and ignorance, and yet still marked by love, passion and hope.

**William BOYD**

**A Good Man in Africa**

A comic novel which won the 1981 Whitbread First Novel Award. Escapee from suburbia, overweight Morgan Leafy is not overburdened with worldly success. Actually, he is refreshingly free from it. But then, as a representative of Her Britannic Majesty in tropical Kinjanja, it was not very constructive of him to get involved in wholesale bribery. Falling back on his deep-laid reserves of misanthropy and guile, Morgan has to fight off the sea of humiliation, betrayal and ju-ju that threatens to wash over him.

**John BOYNE**

**The Absolutist**

September 1919: Tristan Sadler takes a train from London to Norwich to deliver some letters to Marian Bancroft. Tristan fought alongside Marian's brother Will during the Great War, but in 1917 Will laid down his guns on the battlefield, declared himself a conscientious objector and was shot as a traitor. But Tristan also holds another deep secret. *The Absolutist* is a novel that examines the events of the Great War from the perspective of two young soldiers, both struggling with the complexity of their emotions and the confusion of their friendship.

**Malcolm BRADBURY**

**The History Man**

Set in Watermouth University, this is the story of Barbara and Howard Kirk, their very modern marriage and their equally radical politics. It captures the complexities of academic life, from tedious meetings and work-place machinations, to corruption and disruption at the highest levels.
Charlotte BRONTË  
Jane Eyre

Orphaned Jane Eyre grows up in the home of her heartless aunt, where she endures loneliness and cruelty, and at a charity school with a harsh regime. Her natural independence and spirit prove necessary when she finds a position as governess at Thornfield Hall. But when she finds love with her sardonic employer, Rochester, the discovery of his terrible secret forces her to make a choice. Should she stay with him and live with the consequences, or follow her convictions, even if it means leaving the man she loves?

Emily BRONTË  
Wuthering Heights

The wild, passionate story of the intense and almost demonic love between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, a foundling adopted by Catherine’s father. Wrongly believing that his love for Catherine is not reciprocated, Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights, only to return years later as a wealthy and polished man. He proceeds to exact a terrible revenge for his former miseries. This unique novel is a masterpiece of English literature.

Bill BRYSON  
A Short History of Nearly Everything (N/F)

A Short History of Nearly Everything is Bryson’s quest to find out everything that has happened from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization - how we got from there, being nothing at all, to here, being us. His challenge is to take subjects that normally bore the pants off most of us, like geology, chemistry and particle physics, and see if there isn’t some way to render them comprehensible to people who have never thought they could be interested in science. It’s not so much about what we know, as about how we know what we know…

Jung CHANG  
Wild Swans

Through the story of three generations of women -- grandmother, mother and daughter — Wild Swans tells nothing less than the whole tumultuous history of China’s tragic 20th-century, from sword-bearing warlords to Chairman Mao, from the Manchu Empire to the Cultural Revolution. At times terrifying, at times astonishing, always deeply moving, Wild Swans is a book in a million, a true story with all the passion and grandeur of a great novel.

Tracy CHEVALIER  
Falling Angels

1901. The two graves stood next to each other, both beautifully decorated. One had a (ridiculously?) large urn and the other, almost leaning over the first, an (overly sentimental?) angel. The two families visiting the cemetery were divided even more by social class than by taste. They would certainly never have become acquainted had not their two girls, meeting behind the tombstones, become best friends and involved in the life of the gravedigger’s son.

Tracy CHEVALIER  
The Girl with the Pearl Earring

Griet, the young daughter of a tilemaker in seventeenth century Holland, obtains her first job as a servant in Vermeer’s household. Tracy Chevalier shows us, through Griet’s eyes, the complicated family, the society of the small town of Delft, and life with an obsessive genius. Griet loves being drawn into Vermeer’s artistic life, and leaving her former drudgery, but the cost to her own survival may be high.

Tracy CHEVALIER  
Remarkable Creatures

Tracy Chevalier’s stunning novel tells of how one woman’s gift transcends class and gender to lead to some of the most important discoveries of the nineteenth century, and is a revealing portrait of the intricate and resilient nature of female friendship. When Mary Anning uncovers unknown dinosaur fossils in the cliffs near her home, she sets the scientific world alight, challenging ideas about the world’s creation, and stimulating debate over our origins.
J. M. COETZEE  

**Disgrace**

A divorced, middle-aged English professor finds himself increasingly unable to resist affairs with his female students. When discovered by the college authorities, he leaves his job to spend time with his grown-up lesbian daughter on her remote farm. Things between them are strained and the situation becomes critical when they are the victims of a brutal and horrifying attack. Coetzee’s novel, examining post-apartheid culture, won him the Booker Prize in 1999.

J. M. COETZEE  

**The Life and Times of Michael K**

In a South Africa torn by civil war, Michael K sets out to take his mother back to her rural home. On the way there she dies, leaving him alone in an anarchic world of brutal roving armies. Imprisoned, Michael is unable to bear confinement and escapes, determined to live with dignity. The Life and Times of Michael K goes to the centre of human experience - the need for an interior, spiritual life, for some connections to the world in which we live, and for purity of vision. This book won the 1983 Booker Prize.

J. M. COETZEE  

**Summertime**

Summertime can be read as a novel in its own right, but it also completes a trilogy of fictionalised autobiography. A young English biographer is working on a book about the late writer, John Coetzee. He plans to focus on the period when Coetzee was ‘finding his feet as a writer’. Never having met him, he embarks on a series of interviews with people who were important to him. Sometimes heartbreaking, often very funny, Summertime shows us a great writer as he limbers up for his task.

J. M. COETZEE  

**Youth**

The second part of Coetzee’s fictionalised memoirs, the narrator of Youth, a student in 1950s South Africa, has long been plotting an escape from his native country. Studying mathematics, reading poetry, saving money, he tries to ensure that when he arrives in the real world, he will be prepared to experience life to its full intensity, and transform it into art. Arriving at last in London, however, he finds neither poetry nor romance.

Rana DASGUPTA  

**Solo**

Winner of the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize 2010. Solo recounts the life and daydreams of a reclusive 100-year-old man from Bulgaria. Wondering if he has any wisdom to leave to the world, Ulrich embarks on an epic armchair journey through a century of violent politics, forbidden music, lost love and failed chemistry, finding his way eventually to an astonishing epiphany of tenderness and enlightenment.

Alain DE BOTTON  

**The Art of Travel (N/F)**

Drawing on a selection of writers, artists and thinkers, including Flaubert, Edward Hopper, Wordsworth and Van Gogh, Alain de Botton’s bestselling book provides invaluable insights into everything from holiday romance to hotel mini-bars, airports to sight-seeing. The perfect antidote to those guides that tell us what to do when we get there, his book tries to explain why we really went in the first place, and suggests how we might be happier on our journeys.

Charles DICKENS  

**Great Expectations**

Young Pip lives with his sister and her husband, with few prospects for advancement, until a mysterious benefaction takes him from the Kent marshes to London. Pip is haunted by figures from his past - the escaped convict Magwitch, the time-withered Miss Havisham and her proud and beautiful ward, Estella - and in time uncovers not just the origins of his great expectations but the mystery of his own heart.
Emma DONOGHUE

Room

Jack is five. He lives with his Ma. They live in a single, locked room. They don’t have the key. Jack and Ma are prisoners. This extraordinary and moving novel was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2010. The story is narrated from the point of view of the child and reveals the strength of maternal love despite physical and mental deprivation. A must-read for Psychology students!

Margaret DRABBLE

The Millstone

Set in a London not yet quite swinging, where sexual liberation is still on its way, this prize-winning (John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, 1966) novel follows the progress of Rosamund Stacey, who becomes pregnant as a result of a one night stand, and must adapt to life as a single mother, finding herself transformed in the process.

Margaret DRABBLE

The Peppered Moth

It is 1905, and Bessie is a small child living in a South Yorkshire mining town. Unusually gifted, she sits quietly and studies hard, waiting for the day when she can sit the Cambridge entrance exam and escape the way of life her ancestors have never even thought to question. At the other end of the century her granddaughter, Faro, is listening to a lecture on genetic inheritance. She has returned to the town where her grandmother grew up. But for all her exotic ancestry and glamour, has she really travelled any further than her forbears?

Helen DUNMORE

Your Blue-Eyed Boy

Simone is 38, a district judge whose husband Donald is on the verge of bankruptcy and breakdown. Whilst she is at court, passing judgement on the lives of others, Donald stays at home and looks after their two young sons. One morning a letter arrives; someone she has tried to forget has not forgotten her and Simone’s private history is about to collide with her public world.

George ELIOT

Middlemarch

A complex tale of idealism, disillusion, profligacy, loyalty and frustrated love. This penetrating analysis of the life of an English provincial town during the time of social unrest prior to the Reform Bill of 1832 is told through the lives of Dorothea Brooke and Dr. Tertius Lydgate, and includes a host of other remarkable characters who illuminate the condition of English life in the mid-nineteenth century.

Michel FABER

Under the Skin

This remarkable book defies categorisation. Under the Skin introduces Isserley, a woman obsessed with picking up male hitchhikers - so long as they’re well-muscled and alone. But why? As the novel unfolds and the reason becomes clear, the reader is drawn inexorably into a completely unexpected and increasingly terrifying world.

Graham FARMELO

The Strangest Man (N/F)

Paul Dirac was one of the leading pioneers of the greatest revolution in 20th-century science: quantum mechanics. The youngest theoretician ever to win the Nobel Prize for Physics, he was also pathologically reticent, strangely literal-minded and legendarily unable to communicate or empathize. Based on a previously undiscovered archive of family papers, Graham Farmelo celebrates Dirac’s massive scientific achievement while drawing a compassionate portrait of his life and work.
J. G. FARRELL  
**The Siege of Krishnapur**

Winner of the 1973 Booker Prize. Krishnapur is a remote town on the vast North Indian plain. In the Spring of 1857, India is on the brink of a violent and bloody mutiny. For the British in Krishnapur, life is orderly and genteel. Then the sepoys at the nearest military cantonment rise in revolt and the British community retreats with shock into the Residency. *The Siege of Krishnapur* is a modern classic of narrative excitement that also digs deep to explore some fundamental questions of civilisation and life.

Sebastian FAULKS  
**Birdsong**

Set before and during the great war, *Birdsong* captures the drama of that era on both a national and a personal scale. It is the story of Stephen, a young Englishman, who arrives in Amiens in 1910. His life goes through a series of traumatic experiences, from the clandestine love affair that tears apart the family with whom he lives, to the unprecedented experiences of the war itself.

Sebastian FAULKS  
**Charlotte Gray**

In 1942, Charlotte Gray goes to Occupied France on a dual mission: to run an apparently simple errand for a British special operations group, and to search for her lover, an English airman who has gone missing in action. In the small town of Lavaurette, Sebastian Faulks presents a microcosm of France and its agony in ‘the black years’. In a series of shocking narrative climaxes in which the full extent of French collusion in the Nazi holocaust is delineated, Faulks brings the story to a resolution of redemptive love.

Henry FIELDING  
**Tom Jones**

Expelled from Mr Allworthy’s country estate for his wild temper and sexual conquests, the good-hearted foundling Tom Jones loses his money, joins the army, and pursues his beloved across Britain to London, where he becomes a kept lover and confronts the possibility of incest. *Tom Jones* is often regarded as Fielding’s greatest work, and one of the first and most influential of English novels.

F. Scott FITZGERALD  
**The Great Gatsby**

Narrated by an innocent outsider and set against a background of Long Island glamour and New York squalor, this is the story of a mysterious financier’s passion for a young lady and a tale of adultery and murder. The reader is taken into the superficially glittering world of the mansions which lined the Long Island shore in the 1920s, to encounter the narrator’s cousin Daisy, her brash but wealthy husband Tom Buchanan, Jay Gatsby and the mystery that surrounds him. An undisputed classic of 20th century American literature.

F. Scott FITZGERALD  
**Tender is the Night**

Between the First World War and the Wall Street Crash, the French Riviera was the stylish place for wealthy Americans to visit. Among the most fashionable are the Divers - Dick and Nicole. Into their circle comes Rosemary Hoyt, a film star, who is instantly attracted to them, but understands little of the dark secrets and hidden corruption that hold them together. As Dick draws closer to Rosemary, he fractures the delicate structure of his marriage and sets both Nicole and himself on to a dangerous path where only the strongest can survive.

Gustave FLAUBERT  
**Sentimental Education**

Frederic Moreau, a young man in search of excitement, falls in love with Mme. Arnoux, a beautiful, dark-haired older woman. His fascination will last a lifetime, as he works to become first an acquaintance of her husband, then a firm family friend. But Frederic’s hard-won closeness to Mme. Arnoux will not bring satisfaction, only his own ultimate betrayal of love.
Amanda FOREMAN  The Duchess

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was one of the most flamboyant and influential women of the eighteenth century. She was variously a compulsive gambler, a political savante and operator of the highest order, a drug addict, an adulteress and the darling of the common people. This authoritative, utterly absorbing book presents a mesmerizing picture of a fascinating world.

Aminatta FORNA  The Memory of Love

Lying in hospital in Sierra Leone, Elias Cole recalls the desire that drove him to acts of betrayal he has tried to justify ever since. Kai, a gifted young surgeon, who bears mental scars from the civil war, is desperately trying to forget the pain of a lost love. It falls to a British psychologist, Adrian Lockheart, to help the two survivors, but when he too falls in love, past and present collide with devastating consequences. The Memory of Love is a heartbreaking story of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances.

John FOWLES  The Collector

Withdrawn, uneducated and unloved, Frederick collects butterflies and takes photographs. He is obsessed with a beautiful stranger, the art student, Miranda. When he wins the pools he buys a remote Sussex house and calmly abducts Miranda, believing she will grow to love him in time. Alone and desperate, Miranda must struggle to overcome her own prejudices and contempt if she is to understand her captor, and so gain her freedom.

Elizabeth GASKELL  Ruth

Ruth Hilton is an orphaned young seamstress who catches the eye of a gentleman, Henry Bellingham. When she loses her job and home, he offers her comfort and shelter, only to cruelly desert her soon after. Ruth is offered the chance of a new life among people who give her love and respect, even though they are at first unaware of her secret - an illegitimate child. In writing Ruth, Elizabeth Gaskell daringly confronted prevailing views about sin and illegitimacy with her compassionate and honest portrait of a ‘fallen woman’.

Maggie GEE  My Driver

Vanessa Henman flies out to Uganda for an African writers’ conference. She also means to visit her former cleaner, Mary Tendo, now the Executive Housekeeper of Kampala's Sheraton Hotel. But Mary has secretly summoned Vanessa’s beloved ex-husband to her village to help build a new well, and her son Jamil is missing. Vanessa sets off alone on safari to see the mountain gorillas. But she quarrels with her driver and a bloody war closes in. Can anyone save her? And will Mary find her son?

Stella GIBBONS  Cold Comfort Farm

When sensible, sophisticated Flora Poste is orphaned at nineteen, her only choice is to descend upon relatives in deepest Sussex. At Cold Comfort Farm, she meets the doomed Starkadders: cousin Judith, heaving with remorse for unspoken wickedness; Amos, preaching fire and damnation; their sons, lustful Seth and despairing Reuben; child of nature Elfine; and crazed old Aunt Ada Doom. A hilarious and merciless parody of rural melodramas, Cold Comfort Farm (1932) is one of the best-loved comic novels of all time.

Victoria GLENDINNING  Flight

Martagon, an engineer by profession and a loner by nature, falls head-over-heels in love for the very first time. He is masterminding the construction of an airport in Provence. The land on which the airport is built belonged to a feuding brother and sister, and it is Marina, the sister, who throws the detached and rational Martagon so thoroughly off-balance. Marina is beautiful, flamboyant and completely irresistible. He takes risks to be with her, loses his way both professionally and personally, and ends up questioning values he once took for granted.
Nadine GORDIMER  
**July’s People**

For years, it has been what is called a 'deteriorating situation'. Now all over South Africa the cities are battlegrounds. The members of the liberal white Smales family are rescued from the terror by their servant, July, who leads them to refuge in his native village. What happens to the Smales and to July gives us an unforgettable look into the terrifying, tacit understandings and misunderstandings between blacks and whites.

L. P. HARTLEY  
**The Go-Between**

An invitation to a friend’s house changes an adolescent boy’s life. Discovering an old diary, Leo, now in his sixties, is drawn back to the summer of 1900 and his visit to Brandham Hall. The past comes to life as Leo recalls the events and devastating outcome that destroyed his beliefs and future hopes.

Samantha HARVEY  
**The Wilderness**

Jake has Alzheimer’s. As the disease takes hold of him, Jake struggles to hold on to his personal story, to his memories and identity, but they become increasingly elusive and unreliable. What happened to his daughter? Is she alive, or long dead? And why exactly is his son in prison? What went so wrong in his life? There was a cherry tree once, and a yellow dress, but what exactly do they mean?

Susan HILL  
**The Woman in Black**

Proud and solitary, Eel Marsh House surveys the windswept reaches of the salt marshes. Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, is summoned to attend the funeral of Mrs. Alice Drablow, the house’s sole inhabitant, unaware of the tragic secrets which lie hidden behind the shuttered windows. It is not until he glimpses a wasted young woman, dressed all in black, at the funeral, that a creeping sense of unease begins to take hold, a feeling deepened by the reluctance of the locals to talk of the woman in black - and her terrible purpose.

James HOGG  
**The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner**

Early eighteenth century Scotland is gripped by fear and superstition. Robert Wringhim, a boy of strict Calvinist upbringing, is corrupted by a shadowy figure who calls himself Gil-Martin. Under his influence he commits a series of murders which he regards as ‘justified’ by God under the tenets of his faith. Is this stranger a figment of Robert’s imagination or the devil himself? Hogg’s book is a brilliant portrayal of the power of evil, and a scathing critique of organised religion.

Howard JACOBSON  
**The Finkler Question**

Julian Treslove, a professionally unspectacular former BBC radio producer, and Sam Finkler, a popular Jewish philosopher, writer and television personality, are old school friends. They never quite lost touch with each other, or with their former teacher, Libor Sevcik. They share a sweetly painful evening revisiting a time before they had loved and lost. It is that very evening, when Treslove hesitates a moment as he walks home, that he is attacked, and his whole sense of who and what he is inevitably changes. Man Booker Prize winner 2010.

P. D. JAMES  
**Death in Holy Orders**

When the body of a theology student is found on a desolate stretch of the East Anglian coast, his wealthy father demands that Scotland Yard should re-examine the verdict of accidental death. Commander Adam Dalgliesh agrees to visit the young man’s theological college, St. Anselm’s, expecting a straightforward examination of the evidence. Instead he finds himself embroiled in intrigue, conflict and dangerous secrets as the college is torn apart by a sacrilegious and horrifying murder.
Matthew KNEALE  
**English Passengers**

Matthew Kneale’s *English Passengers* tells the story of an 1857 expedition to Tasmania, in search of the Garden of Eden, whose members – including a vicar and a sinister racial theorist – don’t realise they are actually aboard a Manx smuggling ship. Told by a score of different characters and packed with drama, comedy and punch, *English Passengers* is a major work of the imagination.

D. H. LAWRENCE  
**Sons and Lovers**

The marriage of Gertrude and Walter Morel has become a battleground. Repelled by her uneducated and sometimes violent husband, delicate Gertrude devotes her life to her children, especially to her sons, William and Paul, determined they will not follow their father into working down the coal mines. But conflict is inevitable when Paul seeks to escape his mother’s suffocating grasp through relationships with women his own age.

Laurie LEE  
**As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning**

1934. A young man walked to London from the security of the Cotswolds to make his fortune by playing the violin and labouring on a London building site. Knowing one Spanish phrase, he decided to see Spain. For a year he tramped through a country where the signs of impending civil war were clearly visible. 30 years later he captured the atmosphere of the Spain he saw with all the freshness of a young man’s vision, creating a lyrical picture of the beautiful and violent country that was to involve him inextricably.

David LODGE  
**Nice Work**

Winner of the 1988 Sunday Express Book of the Year Award, *Nice Work* is a hilarious comedy of society and class misunderstandings. When Vic Wilcox, MD of Pringle’s engineering works, meets English lecturer Dr. Robyn Penrose, sparks fly as their lifestyles and ideologies collide head on. But, in time, both parties make some surprising discoveries about each other’s worlds - and about themselves.

Alison LURIE  
**The War Between the Tates**

Once the Tates were an attractive family, but now Erica is bored, Brian’s career is at a standstill, and the children have become revolting teenagers. Then Erica discovers that her husband is carrying on with one of his students.

Adeline Yen MAH  
**Falling Leaves**

The story of an unwanted Chinese daughter growing up during the Communist Revolution, blamed for her mother’s death, ignored by her millionaire father and unwanted by her Eurasian step mother. A story of greed, hatred and jealousy, a domestic drama is played against the extraordinary political events in China and Hong Kong. Written with the emotional force of a novel but with a vividness drawn from personal experience.

Adeline Yen MAH  
**Watching the Tree (N/F)**

Adeline Yen Mah interweaves her own experiences with her views on Chinese thought and wisdom to create an illuminating and highly personal guide for Western readers. Born in Tianjin, and later living in London and California, she takes us on a journey through the Chinese language, religions and history, using both Chinese proverbs and her own experiences, to bring to us an understanding of the richness of China and the ways that we can take and use some of the wisdom for ourselves in the West.
Olivia MANNING  The Balkan Trilogy

Living and working in Rumania, Guy and Harriet Pringle are forced to evacuate to Greece before the steady advance of the German army. The Balkan Trilogy is the portrait of their marriage, an evocation of a vanished way of life and an ironic comedy of manners in a breaking world. The books were originally published separately as The Great Fortune, The Spoilt City and Friends and Heroes.

Hilary MANTEL  Wolf Hall

Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2009. England, the 1520s. Henry VIII is on the throne, Cardinal Wolsey is his chief advisor, and into an atmosphere of distrust and need comes Thomas Cromwell, first as Wolsey’s clerk, and later his successor. Wolf Hall is a truly great English novel, which explores the intersection of individual psychology and wider politics. With a vast array of characters, and richly overflowing with incident, it peels back history to show us Tudor England moulding itself with great passion and suffering and courage.

Adam MARS-JONES  Pilcrow

Meet John Cromer, one of the most unusual heroes in modern fiction. If the minority is always right then John is practically infallible. Growing up disabled and gay in the 1950’s, circumstances force John from an early age to develop an intense and vivid internal world. As his character develops, this ability to transcend external circumstance through his own strength of character proves an invaluable asset. Extremely funny and incredibly poignant, this is a major novel from a writer at the height of his powers.

Simon MAWER  The Glass Room

High on a Czechoslovak hill, the Landauer House shines as a wonder of steel, glass and onyx built specially for newlyweds Viktor and Liesel. But the storm clouds of WW2 gather, and eventually the family must flee, accompanied by Viktor’s lover and her child. The house’s story is far from over, however, and as it passes from hand to hand, from Czech to Russian, both the best and the worst of the history of Eastern Europe becomes somehow embodied and perhaps emboldened within the beautiful and austere surfaces and planes so carefully designed.

Cormac McCARTHY  The Road

A father and his son walk alone through burned America, heading through the ravaged landscape to the coast. This is the profoundly moving story of their journey. The Road boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which two people, “each the other’s world entire”, are sustained by love.

Ian McEWAN  Atonement

On the hottest day of the summer of 1934, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis sees her sister Cecilia strip off her clothes and plunge into the fountain in the garden of their country house. Watching her is Robbie Turner, her childhood friend, who, like Cecilia, has recently come down from Cambridge. By the end of that day, the lives of all three will have been changed for ever.

Ian McEWAN  Enduring Love

One windy spring day in the Chilterns Joe Rose’s calm, organized life is shattered by a ballooning accident. The afternoon, Rose reflects, could have ended in mere tragedy, but for his brief meeting with Jed Parry. Unknown to Rose, something passes between them - something that gives birth in Parry to an obsession so powerful that it will test to the limits Rose’s beloved scientific rationalism, threaten the love of his wife Clarissa and drive him to the brink of murder and madness.
Andrew MILLER  Oxygen

In the summer of 1997, four people reach a turning point: Alice Valentine, who lies gravely ill in her West Country home, her two sons, one still searching for a sense of direction, the other fighting to keep his acting career and marriage afloat, and László Lázár, who leads a comfortable life in Paris yet is plagued by his memories of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. For each, the time has come to assess what matters in life, and all will be forced to take part in an act of liberation – though not necessarily the one foreseen.

Brian MOORE  Black Robe

To Father Paul, the Algonkian Indians are pagans in need of salvation. To the Indians, Catholic priests are greedy and selfish. Accompanying Father Paul on his mission to relieve a priest in danger of his life, Daniel is torn between the need to serve God and the power of the Indian way of life.

R. K. NARAYAN  Malgudi Days

Introducing this collection of stories, R. K. Narayan describes how in India “the writer has only to look out of the window to pick up a character and thereby a story”. Malgudi Days portrays an astrologer, a snake-charmer, a postman, a vendor of pies and chappatis - all kinds of people, drawn in full colour and endearing domestic detail. And under his magician’s touch the whole imaginary city of Malgudi springs to life, revealing the essence of India and of human experience.

George ORWELL  Nineteen Eighty-four

Newspeak, Doublethink, Big Brother, the Thought Police - the language of Nineteen Eighty-four has passed into the English language as a symbol of the horrors of totalitarianism. George Orwell’s story of Winston Smith’s fight against the all-pervading party has become a classic, not least because of its intellectual coherence.

Charles PERRAULT  The Complete Fairy Tales

Charles Perrault’s versions gave classic status to the humble fairy tale, and it is in his telling that the stories have been passed down from the seventeenth century to the present day. Perrault’s tales were enjoyed in the salons of Louis XIV as much as they were loved in the nursery. They transmute into vivid fantasies the hidden fears and conflicts by which children are affected: fears of abandonment or worse, conflicts with siblings and parents, and the trials of growing up. A version for grown-ups rather than children’s bedtime reading!

Sylvia PLATH  The Bell Jar

Esther Greenwood is at college and is fighting two battles, one against her own desire for perfection in all things - grades, boyfriend, looks, career - and the other against remorseless mental illness. As her depression deepens she finds herself bell-jarred away from the rest of the world. This is the story of her journey back into reality. The Bell Jar is highly readable, witty and disturbing. What it has to say about what women expect of themselves, and what society expects of women, is as sharply relevant today as it has always been.

Anna QUINDLEN  One True Thing

A young woman is in jail accused of the mercy killing of her mother. She says she didn’t do it. Ellen Gulden is a young, successful New York journalist. When her mother gets cancer, her father, a university professor, insists she comes home. As she looks after her mother, their relationship - tender, awkward and revealing - deepens and Ellen is forced to confront painful truths about her adored father. But as Kate lies dying, and in the weeks that follow her death, events take a shocking and unexpected turn.
Beginning in 1907, the story is of 3 generations of an Indian family, in which Mukunda, a casteless boy foundling, and Bakul, the motherless granddaughter of the house, grow up together. Mukunda spends his time as a servant in the house or reading the books of Mrs. Barnum, an Englishwoman. As he and Bakul grow, they become aware of their intense closeness. He is banished to a school in Calcutta. Mukunda eventually becomes a successful businessman and returns to the only home he knew to resolve the family’s destiny.

Paul Scott’s epic study of British India in its final years has no equal. It records the encounter between East and West through the experiences of a dozen people caught up in the upheavals of the Second World War and the growing campaign for Indian independence. The four books are: The Jewel in the Crown, The Day of the Scorpion, The Towers of Silence and A Division of the Spoils.

Reta Winters has a loving family, good friends, and growing success as a writer of light fiction. Then her eldest daughter suddenly withdraws from the world, abandoning university to sit on a street corner, wearing a sign that reads only “Goodness”. As Reta seeks the causes of her daughter’s retreat, her enquiry turns into an unflinching, often very funny meditation on society and where we find meaning and hope.

The title story in this classic collection tells of Smith, a defiant young rebel, inhabiting the no-man’s land of institutionalised Borstal. As his steady jog-trot rhythm transports him over an unrelenting, frost-bitten earth, he wonders why, for whom and for what he is running. Sillitoe’s depiction of petty crime and deep-seated anger in industrial and desperate cities remains as potent today as it was almost half a century ago.

Steinbeck’s Pulitzer Prize-winning epic remains his undisputed masterpiece. It tells of the Joad family, who, like thousands of others, are forced to travel West from Oklahoma in search of the promised land. Their story is one of false hopes, thwarted desires and broken dreams, yet out of their suffering Steinbeck created a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision; an eloquent tribute to the endurance and dignity of the human spirit.

Jackson, Mississippi, 1962. Black maids raise white children, but are not trusted not to steal the silver. Meet Aibileen, raising her 17th white child and nursing the hurt caused by her own son’s tragic death, Minny, whose cooking is nearly as sassy as her tongue, and white Miss Skeeter, who wants to know why her beloved maid has disappeared. No one would believe they would be friends, fewer still would tolerate it. But each woman finds the courage to cross boundaries. And together they have an extraordinary story to tell... RECOMMENDED!

Paul THEROUX

Allie Fox is going to re-create the world. Abominating the cops, crooks, junkies and scavengers of modern America, he abandons civilization and takes the family to live in the Honduran jungle. There his tortured, messianic genius keeps them alive, his hoarse tirades harrying them through a diseased and dirty Eden towards unimaginable darkness.
Colin THUBRON

In Siberia

This is the account of Thubron’s 15,000-mile journey through an astonishing country - one twelfth of the land surface of the whole earth. He journeyed by train, river and truck among the people most damaged by the breakup of the Soviet Union, travelling among Buddhists and animists, radical Christian sects, reactionary Communists and the remnants of a so-called Jewish state; from the site of the last Czar’s murder and Rasputin’s village, to the ice-bound graves of ancient Sythians, to Baikal, deepest and oldest of the world’s lakes.

Leo TOLSTOY

War and Peace

War and Peace is a vast epic centred on Napoleon’s war with Russia. While it expresses Tolstoy’s view that history is an inexorable process which man cannot influence, he peoples his great novel with a cast of over five hundred characters. Three of these, the artless and delightful Natasha Rostov, the world-weary Prince Andrew Bolkonsky and the idealistic Pierre Bezukhov illustrate Tolstoy’s philosophy in this novel of unquestioned mastery.

Claire TOMALIN

Charles Dickens (N/F)

Dickens was a phenomenon: a demonically hardworking journalist, father of 10 children, tireless walker and traveller, supporter of liberal social causes, but most of all a great novelist. Though sentimental about the family in his writings, he took up passionately with a young actress. Usually generous, he cut off his impecunious children. Republican, he disliked America. This biography captures brilliantly the complex character of this great genius.

Sue TOWNSEND

Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years

End of century Mole. An accidental celebrity, with a spreading bald patch, despairing of current family values, Mole is still worrying: Is Viagra cheating? Why won’t BBC1 produce ‘The White Van’, his serial killer comedy? Will the Millennium Wheel EVER turn? Will Pandora Braithwaite MP become Blair’s favourite babe? Will Pauline Mole throw caution to the winds with a pre-millennium fling? And will Adrian himself find the fulfilment he seeks as celebrity offal chef, single parent, and celibate novelist?

Barbara VINE

The Blood Doctor

The current Lord Nanther embarks on a biography of his great-grandfather, the first Lord Nanther, favoured physician to Queen Victoria, expert on blood diseases and particularly the royal disease of haemophilia. What he uncovers begins to horrify him as he realizes that Nanther died a guilty man - carrying a horrific secret to the grave. The Blood Doctor weaves effortlessly between past and present, public life and private life.

Evelyn WAUGH

Brideshead Revisited

The most nostalgic and reflective of Evelyn Waugh’s novels, Brideshead Revisited looks back to the golden age before the Second World War. It tells the story of Charles Ryder’s infatuation with the Marchmains and the rapidly-disappearing world of privilege they inhabit. Enchanted first by Sebastian at Oxford, then by his doomed Catholic family, in particular his remote sister, Julia, Charles comes finally to recognize only his spiritual and social distance from them.

D.W. WILSON

Once You Break a Knuckle

In remote western Canada, good people sometimes do bad things. Two bullied adolescents sabotage a rope swing, resulting in another boy’s death. A heartbroken young man chooses not to warn his best friend about an approaching car. Crackling with tension and propelled by jagged, cutting dialogue, D.W. Wilson’s stories reveal to us how our best intentions can be doomed to fail or injure, how our loves can fall short or mislead us, how even friendship - especially friendship - can be something dangerously temporary.
This reading list has been compiled by the School Librarian in consultation with members of the English Department teaching staff.

All books listed are available for loan from the Muriel Hall Library (the School Library) which is open every weekday during term-time. Books may also be borrowed at the end of term to read over the holidays.

The titles listed are still in print at the time of issue of this reading list, and should be available from all good bookshops.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Library! We aim to provide support for your studies, and also to make available a rich variety of reading material and other resources to help prepare you for university or for your leisure time.

We are here to help you in all sorts of ways – we can help you find relevant information, assist with accessing online resources, or recommend good books to read. We can provide a quiet place for you to study or sit and read.

We are looking forward to seeing you as you join the Sixth Form!

Mrs. Helen Norris  School Librarian

Mrs. Ann Cohen  Library Assistant

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